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# Self-Determination in the Mideast

A debate from the pages of  
The Militant and Daily World



Dave Frankel VERSUS Tom Foley

## INTRODUCTION

The struggle of the Palestinian people to replace Zionist Israel with a democratic, secular Palestine has evoked considerable controversy and disagreement within the radical and socialist movements. A debate on this issue was conducted in the pages of *The Militant*, which reflects the views of the Socialist Workers Party, and the *Daily World*, which reflects the views of the Communist Party. This pamphlet contains the entire series of articles comprising this debate.

The first article in this collection appeared in *The Militant* as a review of an educational bulletin published by the Socialist Workers Party. The exchange which follows was initiated by the *Daily World*'s polemic against the positions expressed in this review.

Dave Frankel, a staff writer for *The Militant*, who has spoken on the Mideast at more than forty universities, sets forth the revolutionary Marxist approach, supporting the demand of the Palestinian resistance organizations for a democratic, secular Palestine in which both Arabs and Jews can live together.

Tom Foley, a columnist for the *Daily World*, disputes this position, and argues for the maintenance of a separate Jewish state in the Mideast.

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Israel and the Arab Revolution  
by Dave Frankel

Recent events have focused international attention on the Middle East and underlined once again the importance of the Arab revolution. Involved is the destiny of some 110 million people, and the ever-present danger of a nuclear war growing out of the confrontation there between world imperialism and the Soviet workers' state.

Prior to its 1971 convention the Socialist Workers Party had an extensive discussion on revolutionary theory and strategy in the Middle East. The publication of much of that discussion by the National Education Department of the SWP is an especially timely and useful addition to the literature available on the Arab revolution. (*Israel and the Arab Revolution: Fundamental Principles of Revolutionary Marxism*, by Gus Horowitz. Published by National Educational Department of the Socialist Workers Party, 14 Charles Lane, New York, N.Y. 10014. 64 pp. \$1.)

As the introduction points out, "The articles in this collection were written for the purpose of setting down the fundamental revolutionary Marxist principles on Israel and the Arab revolution." These principles were set down in the context of disagreement on the role of democratic demands in the Arab revolution, and on the relation of Israeli Jews to the Arab revolution as a whole. Thus, this collection is not only a valuable exposition of the revolutionary socialist position but is also an example of how a genuine revolutionary organization refines its political program through democratic discussion.

The relation between democratic tasks and the socialist revolution is discussed extensively in these articles. Up until the end of World War II, much of the Arab East was still under direct imperialist rule. French rule in Algeria wasn't ended until 1962. Even after the end of direct imperialist rule, the

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From *The Militant*, November 23, 1973

Arab world was left artificially divided. The division into countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Jordan was the result of the division of the whole area between Britain and France after World War I. The Arab people, however, constitute a single nationality, linked by a common history, religion, language, and culture. Their artificial division facilitates imperialist domination, which continues to this day.

The establishment of genuine national independence and national unification is one of the central tasks of the Arab revolution. This is a democratic task—that is, it was achieved in what are now the advanced capitalist countries during their democratic, antifeudal revolutions. Other demands of this type applicable to the Arab revolution include the need for land reform, an end to the repression of religious minorities, and the winning of many elementary democratic rights.

While the rising capitalist class of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was able to lead the masses against the old feudal aristocracy to realize these demands, the native capitalists in the Middle East—as in the rest of Asia, Africa, and Latin America—depend on imperialist support and denial of democratic rights for their continued rule. Rulers like King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, King Hussein of Jordan, or the emirs of the Arab Gulf would face the danger of being swept away in the course of any mass mobilization against imperialism. Even those representatives of capitalist rule least subservient to imperialism, like Nasser of Egypt, have proved unable to carry out these democratic tasks. The result is that the democratic tasks of the Arab revolution can only be carried out in the course of a socialist revolution.

But the need for a socialist revolution does not imply the rejection of democratic demands. On the contrary, Gus Horowitz, a member of the national committee of the SWP, points out in his article on "The Revolution in the Arab East Since 1967," that "only by championing the democratic demands of the rural poor and the oppressed masses in the Arab world can the working class summon them behind its program for the proletarian socialist revolution."

Since 1967 the struggle of the Palestinian people for their democratic right of self-determination has been the driving force of the Arab revolution as a whole. The resolution adopted by the SWP in 1971, "Israel and the Arab Revolution," makes clear the SWP's position on this struggle. Israel, it says, "serves as the spearhead of imperialism's fight against the Arab revolu-

tion. We unconditionally support the struggles of the Arab peoples against the state of Israel." A counterresolution opposed to the resolution adopted by the convention, while supporting the struggle against the Israeli state, rejected the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine raised by the Palestinian resistance organizations and supported by the majority of the SWP.

Gus Horowitz, in his report to the SWP convention on "The Major Disputed Issues on Israel and the Arab Revolution," said of the counterresolution: "It sees the demand for political democracy serving the objective interests of the capitalist class, simply because a struggle that is *limited* to this demand, will generally be inadequate to prevent the consolidation of power by the national bourgeoisie." Horowitz continued, "The demand for a secular, democratic Palestine is not sufficient by itself. But we do not reject it on that account. We pose a socialist revolution culminating in the creation of a workers state as the means of achieving and guaranteeing a democratic, secular Palestine. We do not counterpose the two. . . .

"One of the ways that the revolutionary party distinguishes itself from the national bourgeoisie, and mobilizes the Palestinian masses independently of the national bourgeoisie, is not by steering clear of the demand for political democracy, but by becoming the *champions* of the struggle for it. The program of the revolutionary party is different from that of the national bourgeoisie, not only because it raises working class demands, but also because it carries out the most consistent and intransigent struggle around democratic demands."

#### SELF-DETERMINATION

Another issue raised in the counterresolution on Israel and the Arab revolution was the proposal that the Israeli Jews should have the right to set up their own state "within the framework of the future workers power in Palestine."

This idea was rejected in the resolution adopted by the SWP. Horowitz explained in a report on the resolution to the SWP national committee that Marxists support the struggles of oppressed nationalities for self-determination "as a means of mobilizing the oppressed nationalities against their oppressors, mobilizing the working class in the oppressor nation against its own ruling class on this question, and thus laying the only basis for a genuine internationalist alliance between them. As we

know, the liberation struggles of oppressed nationalities lead in the direction of the socialist revolution, while the nationalism of oppressor nationalities acts to perpetuate national oppression and capitalist rule." This dynamic, Horowitz explained, was missing in the call for self-determination for the Israeli Jews.

In his report to the SWP convention Horowitz elaborated further on the Marxist approach to this question. He pointed out that the creation of a separate Jewish state contradicts the right of the Palestinians, who are oppressed, to their self-determination because it cuts across their right to a unitary Palestine. "Self-determination," Horowitz said, "speaks to the key question of the nation-state relations between the two nationalities. Will they live in a unitary state, or will they live in separate states? We say that the oppressed nationality has the right to make this choice unilaterally.

"Usually, the right of self-determination is posed as the right of an oppressed nationality to *secede* and form a *separate state*. But the Palestinians are not demanding a separate state. They are demanding a unitary state. This may be unusual, but it is easily understood, once you look at the specifics of their oppression. . . . In Palestine, national oppression has been carried out, not through the forcible retention of the oppressed Palestinians [in a single state with the oppressors, as is usually the case], but through their *forcible eviction*, and through the forcible partition of the country. . . . the reason why [the Palestinians] are demanding a unitary state, rather than a separate state derives from the concrete circumstances of their oppression.

"When the counterresolution calls for the right of the Israeli Jews to form a separate state, it denies this unilateral choice to the Palestinians. This amounts to a *veto* power by the present oppressor nationality over the right of the oppressed nationality to self-determination. Self-determination for both nationalities is not self-determination at all for the Palestinians."

Revolutionary Marxists do not identify the masses of Israeli Jews with the Zionist state. While supporting whatever steps are necessary to end the oppression of the Palestinians, the SWP resolution pointed out, "Our program for the Palestinian revolution and the Arab revolution as a whole includes support of full civil, cultural, and religious rights for all nationalities in the Mideast, including the Israeli Jews."

The nature of the Zionist state requires a growing militarization of all aspects of life in Israel, increasing infringements on democratic rights of Jews as well as Arabs, ever-heavier economic sacrifices by the working class to pay for the Israeli war machine, and a constant rightward evolution in the internal politics of the country. Anti-Arab racism, which is endemic in Israel, spills over to Oriental Jews, who are discriminated against in jobs, housing, education, etc.

Struggles have erupted in all these areas. Such struggles, however, can only attain their goal if they are linked to support of the rights of the Palestinians and to the Arab revolution as a whole.

Within Israel and in the rest of the Middle East, it is necessary to build mass revolutionary Marxist parties able to carry out the perspective of socialist revolution outlined in these articles. It is this perspective that points the way forward for the Israeli Jews, the Arab peoples, and for the world as a whole.

## How Trotskyites support war aims of Tel Aviv hawks by Tom Foley

The Trotskyite position on the Mideast is that "peace is not possible so long as the colonial settler-state of Israel exists," to quote the words of Robb Wright, member of the Young Socialist Alliance, in the November 23 issue of the Trotskyite paper, "The Militant." He states that "the existence of the Zionist state violates the right to self-determination of the Palestinians . . . Thus support for Israel's right to exist . . . is a counterrevolutionary position."

Another article in the same issue of "The Militant" explains the position the (Trotskyite) Socialist Workers Party adopted at its 1971 Convention and still holds today: the Palestinians have the right to self-determination but the Israelis do not, because the Palestinians are an oppressed nationality while the Israelis are an oppressor nationality.

The 1971 SWP Convention rejected a proposal to give what were called "the Israeli Jews" the right to self-determination, because it was asserted that the Palestinians demand the creation of a unitary Palestine as an integral part of their right to self-determination, i.e., a Palestinian state with the borders of the old pre-1948 British mandate of Palestine.

This would not only abolish the state of Israel as it exists at present, but also prevent "the Israeli Jews" from seceding from the new Palestine and forming their own national state.

Gus Horowitz told the 1971 SWP Convention that "this may be unusual, but it is easily understood . . . Self-determination for both nationalities is not self-determination at all for the Palestinians." The Palestinians, he asserted, demand a unitary Palestine, "and we (the Trotskyites) say that the oppressed nationality has the right to make this choice unilaterally," whether the Israelis like it or not.

I have given this SWP position in some detail because it is so crack-brained that many readers will instantly see how it

condemns itself. The Trotskyites are putting it forward as the only "revolutionary Marxist" position on the Mideast.

Lenin in 1914 wrote in his classic work, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," a comment which is just as true today as it was sixty years ago: "Trotsky has never yet held a firm position on any important question of Marxism. He always contrives to worm his way into the cracks of any given difference of opinion, and desert one side for the other. At the present moment he is in the company of the Bundists and liquidators . . ."

Today, his followers have crept into the tents of the Palestinians but their lack of Marxist principle is just the same.

What does the Trotskyite position mean? First of all, it means war, with no peace possible until Israel is destroyed. This is the position of the imperialists and the Zionist rulers of Israel—that Israel must remain in a state of perpetual war or be destroyed.

It makes absolutely no difference that the Trotskyites start from a different position than Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan, because they come to exactly the same conclusions. The SWP hands over on a platter the perfect "justification" the imperialists and Zionists need for continuous military aggression: "defense of the fatherland." The Meir-Dayan forces very well could quote directly from the SWP to "justify" their aggression.

Second, the Trotskyites ignore *class* and the class struggle entirely in their position, which automatically means that it is no kind of Marxist position at all, not even a deviant one. And the effect once more is to strengthen the imperialists and Zionists.

The Israeli ruling class could do no better than to post the SWP position in all public places in Israel, especially places where workers congregate, and assign "innocent bystanders" to make loud comments like: "You see? They want to destroy us. All of us, workers and bosses alike. All Jews. That shows that we all have to stand together and fight for the same thing. You can see, they say here that we have no rights, that they are going to destroy our national state . . ."

Every capitalist ruling class uses this argument of "national unity" in time of war and all other times too. The Israeli ruling class is no exception. But they have a special twist to it, based on the memories of the Nazi holocaust of World War II: the Israeli rulers always go out of their way to jab at this extra-sensitive nerve, this widespread fear of annihilation, even when

they are attacking a pitifully small and weak country like Lebanon. The Trotskyite position will be regarded as a Godsend by them.

So the Trotskyites have made the task of advanced, class-conscious Israeli workers, such as members of the Communist Party of Israel, immeasurably more difficult. Israel's Communists have been doing a truly heroic job, in fighting *against* war, *against* hypocritical ruling class calls for "defense of the fatherland" and "national unity."

They have demanded that Israel recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinians in accordance with United Nations resolutions. In this, they have followed a principled Marxist-Leninist policy. Communists support the just national demands of peoples, not as a "concession" to nationalism, but rather to ensure that a demand made by the working class of a nation is realized under conditions of the maximum democracy.

Finally, the Trotskyites, in their position, artificially create an irreconcilable national conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, stating that realization of one nation's rights means the destruction of the other. The SWP pits Israeli and Palestinian working people against each other on the ground of "revolutionary Marxist" principle! What utter nonsense this is will be shown in a following article.

### The kind of state Trotskyists would set up in Mideast by Tom Foley

*"Complete equality of rights for all nations: the right of nations to self-determination: the unity of the workers of all nations - such is the national program that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers." - V. I. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (1914).*

The Trotskyites do not think much of Lenin. That is one reason why they have dreamed up an entirely artificial "national conflict" between all Palestinians and all Israelis. The 1971 (Trotskyite) Socialist Workers Party Convention decided that the Palestinians' right to national self-determination abolishes Israel and cancels the rights of Israelis, who will be retained within the new "unitary Palestine." The SWP says that the Palestinians are an oppressed nationality and can do this, and the Israelis as an oppressor nationality have no right to complain. The SWP's position violates Marxism at every turn; it is not even *bad* Marxism, it is not Marxism at all. It should be noted that the SWP:

1) does not stand for "complete equality of rights for all nations:" it says the Israeli nation has *no* rights, and the Palestinian nation has "special" privileges that no other nation enjoys;

2) denies the Israelis the right to self-determination and advocates *their forcible retention* within the new Palestine on the grounds of alleged "revolutionary Marxist" principle;

3) accepts without question the idea that any Palestinian state must be identical with the old pre-1948 British mandate of Palestine, whose boundaries were drawn by British imperialists; thus the SWP makes the *entire question* of self-determination for both the Palestinians and the Israelis turn on the question of territoriality, disregarding the real, concrete situation as it exists — literally — "on the ground." The SWP is saying, in effect, that a map of pre-1948 Palestine is more important than reality, more important than any Marxist principle.

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From the *Daily World*, December 14, 1973

Marxists always make a distinction between the *nationalism* of an oppressed nation and the *nationalism* of an oppressor nation. The nationalist demands of an oppressed nation often have a positive content which can be supported by the working class, although not uncritically or unconditionally. In the past, there have been cases where some demands of oppressed nations could not be supported by Marxists.

What *always* can be supported is the demand for an end to national oppression, because it is in the basic interests of the *working class* that all oppression, including national oppression, be ended, so that *working class* demands can be achieved under conditions of the greatest possible democracy.

Marxists are fighting on a working class, not a nationalist basis, to end national oppression so that the workers can best realize their goals in a united way. The workers cannot reach their goals if the capitalists are able to divide their ranks, to play off one national group against another national group of workers, *either within a certain state or internationally*.

Let us imagine for a moment that the Palestine demanded by the Trotskyites has actually come into existence. They refer to it as a "democratic, secular, unitary state," not a socialist one. In any case, this leaves no doubt that it will be divided by classes, even in this "model." An entire national group, the Israelis, will be forcibly retained within it—how, the Trotskyites do not spell out, but it takes little imagination to see how. It will be by the military and police forces of the new state.

It might be asked: how is this going to help the workers, both the Palestinians and the Israelis? Which class is going to benefit from the use of the military forces of the state to hold down a national minority? And won't this simply reverse the existing situation now? Won't it mean the SWP will have to reclassify the Palestinians as "an oppressor nation" and the Israelis as "an oppressed nation"?

The Palestinians, who have suffered enough, do not need this to add to their problems. It is clear that any solution must guarantee the right of both the Palestinians and the Israelis, including their right to self-determination; must unite as closely as possible the interests of both Palestinian and Israeli workers, and that this cannot be achieved by what the SWP proposes. A following article will show how it might be done.

### Self-determination for Palestinians and Israel's security by Tom Foley

The Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party says that the Palestinians' right to national self-determination includes the right to a unitary Palestine (the old pre-1948 Palestine) and that therefore Israel will be abolished and the Israeli people will be forcibly retained within this new Palestine when it comes into being.

In other words, the Trotskyites are saying that the new Palestine—will be a slave state. This is the SWP's idea of "revolutionary Marxist" principles on the Mideast.

In his classic work, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (1914), V. I. Lenin wrote: "The categorical requirement of Marxist theory in investigating any social question is that it be examined within *definite* historical limits, and, if it refers to a particular country (e.g., the national program for a given country) that account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others in the same historical epoch."

This is exactly what the Trotskyites have not bothered to do.

"Palestine" is a Western term which did not exist under the old Ottoman Turkish Empire when it ruled the area, up to 1918. The area we know as "Palestine" was divided among half a dozen Turkish administrative units; the people who lived in "Palestine" did not think in national terms, but described themselves as Muslims or Christians when asked what they were. Some, however, might have called themselves Syrians, because "Syria" was the general Arabic word for everything between Turkish and Egyptian territory, or what Westerners called the Levant or Levantine coast.

After 1918, the borders of "Palestine" were drawn up by the British imperialists, with some concessions to their French rivals, without the slightest reference to the Arabs who lived there. It was within this context that the two Palestinian na-

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From the *Daily World*, December 18, 1973

tions emerged. Clearly, there is nothing sacred about the pre-1948 borders of Palestine.

Secondly, the Trotskyites have not bothered to ask how the Palestinian nation is actually going to implement its right to self-determination. There are about 1.5 million Palestinians, some 900,000 of them refugees in the strict sense, scattered all over the Middle East and the rest of the world, and the remainder in Israeli-occupied territory, either the Gaza Strip or West Bank Jordan. They do not have citizenship in the Arab countries where they live (with the exception of Jordan) and few are "settled" (again with the exception of Jordan).

If two relevant United Nations resolutions are carried out, this problem will be solved. Under the November 22, 1967, UN resolution, Israel will withdraw from occupied Arab territories and Israel's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity will be recognized by the Arab states.

Another clause of this resolution calls for a just solution to the refugee problem, i.e., the Palestinian problem. This can be done on the basis of the existing UN resolution of December 11, 1948, which has been reaffirmed by UN vote each year since then and is still operative.

This resolution states: "The refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return . . (which) shall be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible," that is, by Israel.

The late President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt estimated that about 100,000 Palestinians would choose to return and become citizens of Israel; the rest would choose compensation. But there is no way of telling until the resolution is actually carried out. It seems likely that many Palestinians would leave the Gaza Strip (which was never annexed to Egypt but only administered by it); others might return from the U.S., Kuwait, and elsewhere.

Once these two UN resolutions are implemented, *then* the question of a Palestinian national state and its borders will be relevant. *Then*, unlike now, the Palestinians will be a settled population wherever they happen to be, and it will be possible to draw borders on a concrete, realistic basis, on the basis of a settled, majority population, inhabiting a contiguous territory, having a common economic life, etc. And this will not be a Trotskyite abstraction.

The Marxist position on such issues must be rational, founded on reality, do justice to all nations concerned, and must place the interests of the working class foremost, nationally and internationally.

In the 1918-1922 period, some Polish nationalists demanded that Poland should extend to the Black Sea; some Armenian nationalists said that Armenia should extend to the Caspian, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. This "thirst for the seas" was quenched by a dash of cold water from the glass of reality: whatever the "historic frontiers" involved, and despite the fact that both Poles and Armenians were oppressed nationalities, they had no right to rule over other nations.

The Ukrainians and Byelorussians, the Turks and Azerbaijanis, had rights too. And history teaches not only where borders used to be years ago, but more importantly that no nation can retain its freedom while oppressing others.

It would be idle to speculate on the emergence of a Palestinian national state, since reality will determine its shape. But the Israeli nation can certainly live with that reality.

More than that, recognition of Palestinian rights will remove a major threat to Israel's existence, and strengthen the position of the workers of both nations so that they can more effectively fight imperialism. This is not what the Trotskyites want, but it is what all real Marxists want.

## Why Communist Party opposes national struggle of Palestinian Arabs

by Dave Frankel

Just as it pressured the Vietnamese to compromise their original demands and sign a "peace" treaty that set the stage for renewed warfare, the Soviet bureaucracy is now pressuring the Palestinian resistance movement to tone down its struggle and hop on the Middle East "peace" bandwagon being led by command-in-chief Henry Kissinger. Unfortunately, there is no reason to believe that the results of the Moscow-Washington detente in the Mideast will be any more beneficial to the revolutionary movement than they were in Vietnam.

Predictably enough, this has not deterred the Kremlin's camp followers in the U.S., the leaders of the Communist Party, who have lost no time in adding their own embellishments to what they dub "the road to real peace." The basic CP position was stated in an advertisement in the October 21 *New York Times* headed "Egypt, Israel and Syria Can Live." This ad claimed, "The world is ready to defend the pre-June 1967 borders in the Mid-East. It will never back annexation of Arab lands. Return of the occupied lands is the only way Israel can maintain its own lands. It will mean a just, immediate and lasting peace."

The problem with this position is that Israel's "own lands" were gained through conquest and the expulsion of the Palestinian people. The Arab-Israeli conflict existed before the 1967 war—its basic cause was the expulsion of the Palestinians and the setting up of a racist settler-state. The interest of the Arab regimes in regaining their occupied territories only added an additional element to the struggle.

The question that the CP has to answer is: were the Palestinians justified in fighting against the attempt of the Zionist settlers to take over their land in the first place? Has anything changed to make that struggle any less necessary or just? Although the CP advertisement refers vaguely to "the rights of the Palestinian Arabs," it fails to define these rights.

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From *The Militant*, December 28, 1973

These issues are taken up in a recent series of articles by Tom Foley in the *Daily World*, newspaper of the CP. Foley charges that by denying the right of the Zionists to set up their own state in Palestine, and by supporting the demand of the Palestinian organizations for a democratic secular Palestine in which both Arabs and Jews could live together, "The SWP pits Israeli and Palestinian working people against each other. . . ."

Under the heading of "How Trotskyites support war aims of Tel Aviv hawks," Foley asks, "What does the Trotskyite position mean?" He answers: "First of all, it means war, with no peace possible until Israel is destroyed. This is the position of the imperialists and the Zionist rulers of Israel—that Israel must remain in a state of perpetual war or be destroyed."

Foley has things reversed. The Middle East has been torn by constant wars, punitive raids, and daily terror directed against Arab peoples, and especially the Palestinians, since the creation of Israel. This has occurred independently of the political positions or desires of the Trotskyist movement. The responsibility for this lies not with the SWP or the Palestinian masses struggling to return to their homeland. Rather, it lies with the Zionist state, which must use war and violence to perpetuate its existence, and with the imperialist powers, which use Israel as a bludgeon against the Arab masses.

According to Foley, detente between the Soviet bureaucrats and U.S. imperialism can bring peace. But by its very nature a detente with imperialism means acceptance of its continued rule. When Foley charges that the Trotskyist position "means war," what he really means is that detente between the Soviet bureaucrats and Washington will founder on the rocks of the revolutionary struggle of the Arab masses. Therefore the Arabs should accept the status quo in the interests of Soviet foreign policy.

### SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PALESTINE

The argument that the demand for a unitary Palestine "pits Israeli and Palestinian working people against each other" is worth about as much as the racist argument that the struggle of Blacks for preferential hiring pits Black workers against whites.

It is true that Israelis and Palestinians have been pitted against each other. But this is not because of the demands of the Palestinians, any more than the divisions between Blacks and whites in the U.S. are caused by the demands of Black

people. The national demands of both Blacks and Palestinians are a response to their oppression. The argument that support to such demands "divides the working class" ignores the fact that the working class is already divided by national oppression. Foley's argument puts racist oppression and the struggle against this oppression on the same plane.

The Palestinians are an oppressed nationality. Half of all Palestinians live in United Nations refugee camps, dependent on charity for food and housing—such as it is. Inside the territories occupied by Israel, the Palestinians are subject to direct military occupation. In Israel proper they are kept in line by the repressive Emergency Regulations adopted by the Zionist state from the British. Palestinians are discriminated against in jobs, in education, in housing, and in every other aspect of daily life.

In order to defend the continued existence of the Israeli state, Foley is obliged to dispute this national oppression of the Palestinians. He argues that "the Trotskyites . . . have dreamed up an entirely artificial 'national conflict' between all Palestinians and all Israelis."

Palestinian farmers, workers, shopkeepers and even land-owners and capitalists were expelled to make way for the establishment of Israel. Their national struggle against that displacement will be part and parcel of the socialist revolution in Israel and the whole Mideast. The Palestinians who organized to demand their national rights were in the forefront of the confrontations with the Lebanese and Jordanian regimes in 1969 and 1970. Their struggle has shaken the Arab rulers again and again. It is the procapitalist elements among the Palestinians who favor a retreat from the national struggle and some type of compromise solution.

And within Israel, the Palestinian national question is also key to the class struggle. As long as the Jewish workers remain tied to the idea that they must fight to preserve a Jewish state at the expense of another people, they will be incapable of challenging their own ruling class.

In view of this, when Foley charges that "the Trotskyites ignore *class* and the class struggle entirely in their position," he only reveals that he doesn't understand the relation between the struggle for national liberation and socialism. Or else that he is willing to subordinate that understanding to the narrow interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. Just how far Foley is willing to go in defending the policies of the Kremlin hierarchy is

shown in his scurrilous statement that according to the SWP, "realization of one nation's rights means the destruction of the other."

Foley equates the survival of the Jewish people with the existence of the Zionist state. He says the demand for the destruction of the Israeli settler-state is the same as the demand for the destruction of its inhabitants. Foley writes: "The Israeli ruling class could do no better than to post the SWP position in all public places in Israel, especially places where workers congregate, and assign 'innocent bystanders' to make loud comments like: 'You see? They want to destroy us. All of us, workers and bosses alike. All Jews. That shows that we all have to stand together and fight for the same thing. You can see, they say here that we have no rights, that they are going to destroy our national state . . .'"

This is all very eloquent, but the Israeli ruling class didn't need Tom Foley in order to come up with the argument that support to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination is tantamount to calling for the annihilation of the Israeli Jews. Israel's rulers have charged all along that the Palestinians are motivated by the desire to "drive the Jews into the sea." That is how they justified driving the Palestinians into exile to begin with. The job of revolutionaries is not to call on the Palestinians to accept their oppression in order to prove to the Israeli oppressors that they have nothing to fear. We have to explain to the Israeli people that they can only find security by abandoning their own exclusive state and living together with the Palestinians.

By giving credence to the Israeli propaganda that a democratic secular Palestine would mean the destruction of the Israeli Jews, or at best the denial of their democratic rights, Foley does a disservice to the Arab revolution as a whole. His argument leads to the conclusion that Zionism really is in the interests of the Jewish people, and that a separate Jewish state is necessary to guarantee the rights of the Jews in the Middle East.

## How Communist Party denies Palestinian rights with Mideast 'peace' fraud

by Dave Frankel

For the last forty years the U.S. Communist Party has been pushing one "peace" plan after another, all of which have been based on the collaboration of the Soviet bureaucracy with imperialism, and all of which have failed to bring peace. In the 1930s they promised that peace would be guaranteed by "collective security" deals between Stalin and the "western democracies." In 1939, when Stalin turned around and signed a pact with Hitler, the CP again promised peace. More promises were forthcoming after World War II when the "Big Four" set up the United Nations. And now it's the Nixon-Brezhnev detente that's supposed to hold the key to world peace.

Like any inveterate snake-oil salesman, the CP gets indignant when someone points out the operation is a fraud. The latest example of this is the series of three articles by Tom Foley in the December 11, December 14, and December 18 *Daily World*. Foley's three-part hatchet job is aimed at the Socialist Workers Party's insistence that there will be no peace in the Middle East as long as the Israeli settler-state is maintained. He also takes exception to the idea that the Soviet bureaucracy's support to the existence of Israel within its pre-1967 boundaries is a violation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. What Foley is concerned with, however, is not only the SWP, which is the most consistent defender in the U.S. of the Palestinian struggle, but the Palestinian movement itself. As will be seen, the CP places its support to the narrow interests of the Soviet bureaucracy above any concern about the rights of the Palestinians and the needs of the socialist revolution in the Arab East.

After informing his readers that the SWP is really helping out Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan and pitting Palestinians and Israelis against each other by dreaming up "an entirely artificial 'national conflict' between all Palestinians and all Israelis," Foley asserts that the SWP "does not stand for 'com-

plete equality of rights for all nations': it says the Israeli nation has *no* rights, and the Palestinian nation has 'special' privileges that no other nation enjoys." Furthermore, says Foley, the SWP "denies the Israelis the right to self-determination and advocates *their forcible retention* within the new Palestine. . . ."

What is the real position of the SWP on this? First of all, the SWP supports the right of the Israeli settlers to remain in Palestine, to maintain their own language and culture, to participate in the politics of the area, and to have the same democratic rights of freedom of speech, press, and assembly as others. What it does not support is the right of the Israeli settlers to oppress the Arab masses and to maintain a separate state at the expense of the Palestinians. The Israeli state was set up by driving the Palestinians from their land. The problem in the Middle East is not that the Palestinians have special privileges, and not that they are claiming any, but that they have been denied the right to live in their own land.

It is the Jewish settlers who have oppressed the Palestinians. The form of this oppression—the expulsion of the native population—dictates the specific character of the struggle, which is for the right of the Palestinians to return and establish their own state. This is central to the question of which nation should have the right to self-determination in Palestine.

This right originated as a demand for democracy, a demand that one nation should not oppress other nations. As such, it only makes sense when it is directed by an oppressed nation against its oppressor. If the demand for self-determination were simply based on the right of people to set up a state of their own, then it would make just as much sense to call for self-determination for the whites in South Africa or Zimbabwe as for the Blacks.

As for Foley's argument that self-determination for the Palestinians means the "forcible retention" of the Jews in the new Palestinian state, the Palestinians offer the Israelis an equal role in a state that would represent both peoples. Those unwilling to accept a situation in which they could no longer oppress the Palestinians could leave, just as many French colonialists whose families had been living in Algeria for more than 100 years left the country after the Algerian revolution.

By talking about the fight against national oppression *in general*, Foley avoids the specific character of the oppression of the Palestinians, and the specific demands they have raised to end their oppression. First and foremost of these is the de-

mand for the destruction of the racist settler-state that has been the instrument for their dispossession. In contrast to Foley, while Lenin insisted on the *general* right of secession, he insisted on each case being analyzed separately from the point of view of who was the oppressor and who the oppressed. In "The Right of Nations to Self-determination," Lenin calls for "the recognition of the right to secession for all; the appraisal of each concrete question of secession from the point of view of removing all inequality, all privileges, and all exclusiveness."

Another of Foley's big complaints about the SWP is that it "accepts without question the idea that any Palestinian state must be identical with the old pre-1948 British mandate of Palestine, whose boundaries were drawn by British imperialists. . . ." According to Foley, "'Palestine' is a Western term which did not exist under the old Ottoman Turkish Empire when it ruled the area, up to 1918. . . . the people who lived in 'Palestine' did not think in national terms, but described themselves as Muslims or Christians when asked what they were. Some, however, might have called themselves Syrians. . . .

"After 1918, the borders of 'Palestine' were drawn up by the British imperialists, with some concessions to their French rivals, without the slightest reference to the Arabs who lived there. It was within this context that the two Palestinian nations emerged. Clearly, there is nothing sacred about the pre-1948 borders of Palestine."

By implying that Palestine was simply a creation of the imperialists, Foley tries to give a left cover to his position in favor of compromising the national rights of the Palestinians. The real nature of his position is graphically revealed by comparing his statement to one by Golda Meir on the same topic. In an interview in the *London Times* of June 15, 1969, Meir said: "There was no such thing as Palestinians. When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was either southern Syria before the first world war, and then it was a Palestine including Jordan. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist."

The national consciousness of the Palestinians developed and defined itself in the course of the thirty-year struggle against British rule and Zionist colonization. What is involved is not the borders drawn by the British and French, but the national consciousness of the Palestinian people. Does the fact that the

borders of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam were drawn by the French imperialists legitimize trampling on the national rights of the peoples involved?

Foley's final argument against the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is that it would be impractical, "a Trotskyite abstraction." He writes, "the Trotskyites have not bothered to ask how the Palestinian nation is actually going to implement its right to self-determination. There are about 1.5 million Palestinians, some 900,000 of them refugees in the strict sense, scattered all over the Middle East and the rest of the world [Foley is mistaken. The UN lists about 1.5 million Palestinians as registered refugees. The total population is nearly three million—D. F.]. . . ."

This same argument was also raised about the possibility of setting up a Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionists, with the help of a resolute leadership, the aid of Truman and Stalin, and in the context of the defeat of the social revolution in Western Europe and the temporary triumph of world reaction, were able to overcome the obstacles in the way of their reactionary scheme.

But today there is a new rise in the world revolution, headed by a deepening radicalization in the main imperialist countries themselves. The Palestinian struggle is part of this new revolutionary wave. The Arab masses have repeatedly shown their identification with the Palestinians and their willingness to fight alongside of them. Foley's problem is not simply that he thinks the demands of the Palestinians are impractical but the perspective of the socialist revolution as a whole. He and the Soviet bureaucracy that he serves prefer to put their trust in deals with imperialism rather than in the revolutionary movement of the Arab masses. That is the difference between the CP and the SWP.

## Right to self-determination in Mideast

by Tom Foley

The Daily World is again being attacked for a series of articles I wrote on Israel, the Palestinians and Mideast peace. The attack comes in a two-part article by Dave Frankel in the December 28 and January 11 issues of the Trotskyite newspaper, The Militant. It is titled: "How Communist Party denies Palestinian rights with Mideast 'peace' fraud." We have to thank Frankel and The Militant for spelling "Communist Party" correctly, in big type.

The articles, which take up two full pages in The Militant, deny in effect that there is any Israeli nation or ever was one. Therefore, under the Trotskyite plan for a new Palestine, which would incorporate the present Israeli state and abolish it, the Israelis would have no national rights, including the right to self-determination, because the Trotskyites do not consider them to be a nation.

It seems to me that Frankel could have said this, in so many words, right off, without beating around the bush in his two rambling articles. He could have said *"there is no Israeli nation,"* just like that, and then all of us would know where we are.

Instead, Frankel simply avoids using the term "nation" when he refers to Israelis. He says "the Israeli settlers," or "the Jewish settlers." He denies my contention that the position of the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party denies the Israelis their right to self-determination and would forcibly retain them within the new Palestine projected by the SWP. He says: "the SWP supports the right of the Israeli settlers to remain in Palestine.

Those unwilling to accept a situation in which they could no longer oppress the Palestinians could leave, just as many French colonialists whose families had been living in Algeria for more than 100 years left the country after the Algerian revolution."

I am not impressed by Frankel's assertion that "the Israeli settlers" in the new Palestine will enjoy equal democratic rights with all other Palestinians. The fact is that they will be denied the basic democratic right of being considered a nation; they will not have the right to self-determination.

This is like saying the Ukrainians enjoyed the same rights as everybody else within Tsarist Russia . . . except the right of

From the *Daily World*, January 12, 1974

being Ukrainians! And I trust that Frankel will see my point when I say that this "democratic Palestine" he favors guarantees national rights *for nobody*, neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians. There is supposed to be one "equal" category, devoid of nationality, for all, according to the SWP. How "pure" can you get?

The Soviet Union and the international Communist movement, from 1947 until today, have said that *two nations* emerged in Palestine from 1918 on, and that *both nations* must be accorded their legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination, to set up their own national state, etc.

Frankel doesn't like my statement that there was no "Palestine" before 1918, when the British imperialists created it. But this is a simple fact of history which no Arab will deny. And I did not borrow it from Golda Meir, as Frankel implies: actually, I came across it first in the book by the well-known Arab nationalist writer, George Antonius, "The Arab Awakening," published in 1946. It has been issued in paperback here, by Capricorn in 1965, and is worth looking at, especially the map of pre-1918 Syria (which includes "Palestine") on page 176.

However, despite all his foot-dragging, Frankel admits Palestine, and therefore Palestinians, did not exist before 1918. He writes: "The national consciousness of the Palestinians developed and defined itself in the course of the 30-year struggle against British rule and Zionist colonization." But . . . Mr. Frankel . . . when did this "30-year struggle" take place? Wasn't it precisely 1918-1948, the years of British control of Palestine?

And, if you are saying that the Palestinian Arab nation took shape in 1918-1948, why do you refuse to say that the Palestinian Jewish nation (i.e., the Israeli nation) took shape in those same years? Isn't it because an admission of this kind would destroy your whole wretched position and place both Palestinian nations on an equal plane, in terms of formation, etc.? Isn't it because such an admission would back up the Soviet Union's stand on the question?

Finally, the parallel drawn with the French settlers in Algeria is incorrect. It is incorrect because these settlers always considered themselves French, part of the French nation, and never went through a process of separate national development (although in fact many of them were Spanish and Italian in origin). After 1962, many of them chose to return to a "homeland" they had never seen.

## Why Socialists oppose partition of Palestine

by Dave Frankel

Some people are genuinely confused by the complexity of the conflict in the Mideast. Others take advantage of the complexities for reasons of their own. We will let our readers judge for themselves which is true in the case of Tom Foley.

In the January 12 *Daily World* Foley purports to answer two articles by me criticizing the Communist Party's position on the Palestinian struggle and Israel. His thesis, which is repeated over and over again, is clear enough. In Foley's view, it is a fundamental right of the Israelis to maintain their own separate state in Palestine. Foley claims that my articles "deny in effect that there is any Israeli nation or ever was one. Therefore, under the Trotskyite plan for a new Palestine, which would incorporate the present Israeli state and abolish it, the Israelis would have no national rights, including the right to self-determination, because the Trotskyites do not consider them to be a nation."

This argument contains one lie and one debater's trick. The lie is that the Socialist Workers Party is in favor of the Israelis having "no national rights." As I pointed out in my January 11 article, "the SWP supports the right of the Israeli settlers to remain in Palestine, to maintain their own language and culture, to participate in the politics of the area, and to have the same democratic rights of freedom of speech, press, and assembly as others." The rights of a separate language and culture are both national rights. The debater's trick is the attempt to shift the discussion to whether or not the Israeli Jews represent a nation in their own right. In my opinion they do, but *this has nothing whatever to do with the question of whether the Israelis should have the right to set up and maintain their own state on the land of the Palestinians.*

Foley's syllogism is that *all* nationalities have an equal right to self-determination; the Israeli Jews are a nation; therefore, they have the right to their own state. By *assuming* that *all* nationalities have an equal right to self-determination, Foley

ducks the whole argument. And this false equation between nationality and self-determination is made by Foley repeatedly, as when he says that in a unitary Palestine the Israelis "will be denied the basic democratic right of being considered a nation; they will not have the right to self-determination."

The establishment of equality among nations is one of the goals of socialism. Such equality does not exist today. Marxists seek to push forward the process of eliminating national oppression through supporting the democratic demands of oppressed nationalities. The relation of self-determination to nationality was explained as follows in the January 11 *Militant*:

"It is the Jewish settlers who have oppressed the Palestinians. The form of this oppression—the expulsion of the native population—dictates the specific character of the struggle, which is for the right of the Palestinians to return and establish their own state. This is central to the question of which nation should have the right to self-determination in Palestine.

"This right originated as a demand for democracy, a demand that one nation should not oppress other nations. As such, it only makes sense when it is directed by an oppressed nation against its oppressor. If the demand for self-determination were simply based on the right of people to set up a state of their own, then it would make just as much sense to call for self-determination for the whites in South Africa or Zimbabwe as for the Blacks."

Thus, recognizing the fact that an Israeli nation has evolved in the course of the colonization of Palestine does not imply support to the right of the settlers to carve out a state for themselves at the expense of another people. When two nations both claim the right to set up a state in the same territory, the approach of Marxists is to view the problem in the context of the overall class struggle and ask: Which is the oppressed, and which the oppressor?

As I pointed out in my January 11 article, this was the method of Lenin. "In contrast to Foley, while Lenin insisted on the *general* right of secession, he insisted on each case being analyzed separately from the point of view of who was the oppressor and who the oppressed." Lenin did not assume that the demand for self-determination was applicable just because of the existence of a nation. He saw the right to form a state as a means for oppressed nationalities to guarantee the end to their oppression.

In contrast to Lenin, Foley assumes that in a conflict of national rights between oppressed and oppressor nationalities both should be treated equally. He says: "The Soviet Union and the international Communist movement, from 1947 until today, have said that *two nations* emerged in Palestine from 1918 on, and that *both nations* must be accorded their legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination, to set up their own national state, etc."

In reality, Stalinist policy on Palestine in 1947 was motivated by the belief that the Zionist regime would prove friendlier to the USSR, therefore more "progressive," than an Arab state. At that time the Zionists were engaged in a sharp conflict with the British, who wanted to maintain Palestine as a colony. Washington had only begun its drive to replace British imperialism in the Mideast, and it seemed to Stalin that a weakening of British influence would serve his interests.

Just how far Stalin went in subordinating the rights of the Palestinian people to his immediate foreign policy objectives was indicated by David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, in an interview in the *Christian Science Monitor* published February 20, 1971. He said:

"We cannot forget that the Russians were the first people to help us, and before 1948 were the only ones to stand sincerely with us when the United States put an arms embargo on us. . . .

"They sent us arms through Czechoslovakia when we needed them most. I doubt whether we would have been able to defeat the Arabs in 1948 and 1949 without their help."

The demand of the Palestinian liberation movement is for a single state in Palestine in which both Arabs and Jews can live together. The demand of the Zionists is for their own exclusive state there. These demands are mutually contradictory. To support the right of the Israelis to maintain their own state is in practice to oppose the national rights of the Palestinians.

This was clearly pointed out in my previous articles, where it was explained that the Soviet bureaucracy and its supporters in the U. S. were subordinating the rights of the Palestinians to diplomatic deals with U. S. imperialism. Was Foley too confused to get the point? I don't think so.

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